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Dear George:

1.

I appreciate your letter of September 25th on COINS. Since officially entering on my duties as Director of Central Intelligence on August __th, I have taken the following steps to accelerate progress on this project.

2.

First, in the larger framework within which COINS should be addressed, I have designated a new Acting Chairman for the Intelligence Information Handling Committee (IHC), replacing General Robert Taylor III who retired last March. I have instructed the new incumbent, [] to take energetic actions to carry out DCID responsibilities assigned to that committee, many of which bear directly on the goal of the steady, orderly upgrading of COINS. As you know, I am studying the entire matter of the functioning of all USIB committees, including their possible common requirements for information that might be organized in a formatted and automated manner. One of my initial conclusions is that the IHC should provide continuing technical assistance to the substantive USIB committees in applying data automation where appropriate in their particular areas of responsibility.

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3.

Second, on September 6th I forwarded to the President my state^{ment} of Objectives for the Intelligence Community, with copies to you and to other senior officials in the White House, the State and Defense Departments, and the OMB. I now have out for coordination more precise sets of objectives for the IRAC and USIB. These guidance documents involve a number of undertakings that have direct implications for intelligence information handling. The important point, I think, is that as part of our community forward planning we should identify at the outset the data bases and the organization of the flows of information required to carry out these objectives. I am looking to the IHC as my vehicle to advise and support on these matters.

4.

As respects the quality, timeliness and usability of the COINS materials, in the DCI's office this is a continuing concern of General Graham's Product Review Group (PRG) within the Intelligence Community Staff, as well as the IHC. Illustrative of the initiatives we are now setting in motion are the following:

a.

-- We are beginning to involve the USIB substantive committees in working with the IHC to validate the community need for particular kinds of data, and to provide guidance on improved file content and coverage.

On the basis of these validations and other evidence, I intend to call on the appropriate agency heads in USIB to accept responsibility, including financial responsibility, for the development and continuing maintenance of specified files for COINS for which certain agencies have particular competence.

4.6. -- A survey is underway by PRG and IHC to illustrate and characterize the security ~~classification problems~~ *and dissemination restrictions* that must be dealt with to make data in COINS files more complete and accessible throughout the community. This involves the difficult judgment of balancing the protection of intelligence sources and methods against the desirability of sharing intelligence information to the extent of actual need. I believe some traditional parochialism can be removed. Based on results of our present survey, we will begin a purposeful and orderly examination of this problem using the USIB structure.

C. -- Enriching the substantive content of COINS files is another matter currently engaging our attention. PRG and IHC are now testing for crisis and warning situations the formatted rapid exchange of current intelligence among watch officers and intelligence analysts in the Washington area command centers. While this project has a limited scope, it serves a real and current need. I expect that this experiment will take us one more step in expanding the on-line use of formatted intelligence materials by operational users.

25X1. [] and I are in agreement that we must improve our understanding of the character of community "need" for files in COINS and develop improved measurements of the "costs" involved. The interagency Data Base Working Group, chaired by [] representative, and the COINS Project Manager's Office are now working on this problem, and these matters will remain under continuing IRAC review.

6. I agree with your statement that in order to make COINS a community-wide data-sharing system these tasks must be performed under the direct guidance of the DCI. Dr. Schlesinger's designation last April of ASD(I) as Executive Agent does not derogate from that ultimate responsibility. Rather, it seeks to make effective use of the important capabilities that exist within DOD to attack COINS problems that are inextricably related to other Defense activities.

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25X1 [] has been forceful and constructive in moving along with this project, and he has brought to bear an experienced and well-qualified staff under

25X1 [] his Deputy for Intelligence and Warning. Our inter-staff relations are excellent.

25X1 The areas in which [] and his people can be most effective include the development of the communication network and system hardware for COINS. This must be consistent with the independent development within Defense of the Intelligence Data Handling System (IDHS) and Worldwide Military Command and Control System (WMCCS) networks. These technical aspects involve detailed DOD planning which is also under the continuing review of ASD(I) as Program Manager for the Consolidated Defense Intelligence Program (CDIP). The day-to-day technical operational management of the COINS network falls appropriately within Defense, since by far the largest and most complex part of the system is there as well as the largest number of present and prospective users. The predominant number of DOD agency, Service and Command users also makes it appropriate for statistical analysis and user training to be directed by the Project Manager's Office under ASD(I). The technical approach to the computer multi-level security problem can best be mounted by NSA within DOD.

8. In addition to the continuing overview responsibility of the DCI, I have some non-delegable responsibilities bearing on COINS.

a. -- The statutory charge on the DCI to protect intelligence sources and methods necessitates that I exercise ultimate judgment as to the content of shared files.

b. -- The DCI is responsible for presenting finished intelligence to the highest level consumers and for improving the quality, scope and timeliness of those products. This bears on the manner in which the community's intelligence production elements actually perform their work, the substantive materials available for use, and the mechanisms and techniques applied to develop the products.

c. -- The DCI has been charged with presenting the community's National Foreign Intelligence Program Budget Recommendations, drawing on the advice of IRAC in evaluating competing claims for limited resources. COINS, like other projects, must be subject to cost-benefit analyses and receive ultimate review in the IRAC forum.

9. Your letter raises questions which get to the heart of a total concept for COINS. In brief, the direction of my thinking lies along these lines:

a. -- There is a need for shared intelligence data bases, organized and maintained as a result of the official assignment of this responsibility to selected agencies, and available where use ~~is~~ need is established. We are now examining, more broadly than ever before, existing files throughout the community that may be candidates for data sharing.

b. -- COINS gives substantial evidence of now being able to serve analysts who are dealing with specific, fact-oriented questions. It is much harder to get at the cost-benefit relationship relative to the possible on-line sharing of estimative data, particularly related to economic and political factors as distinguished from physical and measurable observables. The warning and current intelligence areas offer us cases for clinical examination, and we are now working along these lines in the National Operations and Intelligence Watch Officers Net (NOIWON). This net includes both intelligence personnel and product consumers.

c. -- The question of the appropriate number of intelligence data ^{for} handling systems is one/which the ASD(I) technical planning will provide further insights. The need within Defense to interface intelligence and non-intelligence computer and communication networks does not leave the intelligence community freedom to dictate this judgment.

10. I share your view that a total concept for COINS should be promulgated for community guidance, implementing plans issued, and management responsibilities assigned. staff and mine are continuing to work energetically toward the next level of integrated planning and review, which we will measure at the IRAC meeting later this month. We are committed to further reporting to you on these matters by January 1974, and we will be keeping your staff continually informed as we move ahead this fall.

Sincerely,

WEC

Director of Central Intelligence

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